Tax Exemption and Duty Relaxation on Raw Material

1452. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have set a target of atleast 200 million telephones by 2007;

(b) if so, whether Government would require equipment worth Rs. 1,00,000 crores;

(c) if so, whether his Ministry has already approached Finance Ministry on the terms the indigenous manufacturing sector are facing as the industry has been demanding tax exemption and duty relaxation on raw materials and components; and

(d) if so, to what extent the Finance Minister has agreed and by when Government are likely to start taking action for improving telephones as suggested by the Ministry to achieve it by 2007?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) Yes, Sir. Government envisages to achieve a total of 200-250 million telephones (fixed and mobile) by the year 2007.

(b) to (d) For achieving a total of 200-250 million telephones by the year 2007, the service providers would require equipment worth Rs. 1,00,000 crore to Rs. 1,50,000 crore. Indigenous telecom equipment manufacturing sector and also some of the multinational companies have submitted their proposals for giving impetus to indigenous manufacturing, including tax exemption and duty relaxation, for meeting the growing requirements of the service providers. These proposals are normally considered as part of recommendations for the Budget.

Demand of Postal Employees

1453. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the All India Postal Extra Department Employees Union

has decided to go on an indefinite strike in support of its demand for merger of 50 per cent Dearness Allowance with pay, grant of trade union facilities and pension;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the action taken by Government to look into their demands?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise in view of (a) above.

Conversion of Vacant Looking Post Offices into Shopping Areas

1454. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the action taken to modernize the Indian Post Offices to combat the hi-tech invasion;

(b) whether Government proposed to transform the vacant looking post offices into shopping areas; and

(c) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) The Department has been modernizing and computerizing its Post Offices since early 1990s. Upto Ninth Five Year Plan, 1772 Post Offices were provided with computers. During the Tenth Five Year Plan, it is proposed to computerize and network all 845 Head Post Offices and 6861 large Sub Post Offices. Some other modernization initiatives to combat the hi-tech invasion include transmission of money orders using VSAT technology, setting up Automatic Mail Processing Centres at Mumbai and Chennai, introduction of new e-based services such as e-Post, e-Bill Post, Track and Trace for Speed Post articles, on-line handling of customers grievances.

(b) and (c) Post Office buildings are constructed or hired as per laid down norms. Every effort is made to optimally utilize the space available in Post Offices and to avoid 'vacant look'. Post Offices are furnished with proper counters, public space, transacting facilities. Of late, the Department